In the Claims

1. (currently amended) An edible, clear, high oil loaded, thermodynamically stable oil-in-water microemulsion comprising :

(a) at least 30% of oil;

(b) from 1 to 30% of a non-ionic surfactant system having a hydrophilic lipophilic balance, HLB, comprised between 9 and 18;

(c) about 17 % or less [[than 20%]] of co-solvent; and

(d) at least 30% of water.

2. (currently amended) An edible, clear, high oil loaded, thermodynamically stable oil-in-water microemulsion ~~according to claim 1,~~ comprising:

(a) at least 30% of oil;

(b) from 1 to 30% of a non-ionic surfactant system having a hydrophilic lipophilic balance, HLB, comprised between 9 and 18;

(c ) less than 20% of co-solvent; and

(d) at least 30% of water;

wherein the weight ratio between the surfactant system and the co-solvent is of 1 to 1.

3. (original) A microemulsion according to claim 1, wherein the oil phase comprises an oil-soluble antioxidant.

4. (original) A microemulsion according to claim 3, wherein the oil-soluble antioxidant is tocopherol.

5. (original) A microemulsion according to claim 1, wherein the oil is selected from the group consisting of lemon, berry, lime, orange, grapefruit, tangerine, mandarin, kumquat and bergamot oil, and any mixture thereof.

6. (previously presented) A microemulsion according to claim 1, wherein the surfactant system comprises at least one surfactant selected from the group consisting of polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan monolaurate, polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan monopalmitate, polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan monostearate, polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan monooleate, polyethylene glycol sorbitan laurate, hexaethylene glycol sorbitan monooleate, polyoxyethylene sorbitan stearate, decaglyceryl monooleate, decaglyceryl dioleate, polyoxyethylene sorbitan tristearate, monodehydrosorbitol monooleate, sorbitan monolaurate and sorbitan monopalmitate.

7. (original) A microemulsion according to claim 1, wherein the co-solvent is an alcohol selected from the group consisting of propylene glycol, ethanol, mono- and di-saccharide sugars and sugar alcohols.

8. (original) A microemulsion according to claim 7, wherein the sugar alcohol is selected from the group consisting of sorbitol, xylitol and mannitol.

9. (original) A microemulsion according to claim 7, wherein the alcohol is propylene glycol.

10. (original) A microemulsion according to claim 1, wherein the surfactant system has a lipophilic hydrophilic balance comprised between 12 and 15.

11. (original) A clear beverage comprising a microemulsion according to claim 1.

12. (original) A clear beverage according to claim 11, comprising an antioxidant.

13. (original) A method for imparting, improving, enhancing or modifying the organoleptic properties of a flavoring composition or a flavored product, wherein a microemulsion according to claim 1 is added to said composition or product as a flavor carrier.

14. (original) A method according to claim 13, wherein the flavored product is a clear beverage.

15. (currently amended) A process for the preparation of a microemulsion comprising at least 30% of oil; from 1 to 30% of a non-ionic surfactant system having a hydrophilic lipophilic balance, HLB, comprised between 9 and 18; less than 20% of co-solvent ; and at least 30% of water, ~~according to claim 1,~~ comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing a continuous phase consisting of water and co-solvent;

(b) adding a primary surfactant to get a clear surfactant/water phase dispersion;

(c) adding an oil phase, to form a milky dispersion;

(d) titrating said dispersion with a co-surfactant to convert it into a clear microemulsion.